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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3762

INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 2042

RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 1491

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEHC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000765

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, OES/IHB, MED, AIAG

STATE PASS TO AID

DEFENSE FOR OSD

DEFENSE PASS TO CENTCOM

HHS FOR OGHA

HHS PASS TO CDC

USDA PASS TO APHIS

AMMAN FOR ESTH HUB OFFICER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2019

TAGS: KFLU MARR PREL TBIO KPAO KU

SUBJECT: KUWAIT H1N1 CASES ACCELERATE

REF: A. KUWAIT 633

1B. KUWAIT 702

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Thomas Williams for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: The GOK's Ministry of Health (MOH) has reported significant increases in H1N1 influenza cases in recent days, with 265 cases confirmed as of August 2. Separately, U.S. Army Central Command (ARCENT) in Kuwait has reported a spike in suspected H1N1 transmissions among personnel serving at Camp Arifjan, the largest U.S. base in Kuwait; previously, almost all suspected and confirmed cases pertained to personnel transiting Kuwait. As of August 1, ARCENT has reported a total of 131 confirmed H1N1 influenza cases in Kuwait, with 129 additional samples awaiting test results. End Summary.

GOK REPORTS 107 NEW CASES IN THREE DAYS...

12. (SBU) The MOH has announced a slew of new H1N1 cases in the past three days: 44 on July 31, 39 on August 1 and 54 on August 2, bringing the total to 265 (compared to 35 on July 3). Some newspapers reported these new tallies on their front pages, while others gave the news less prominent coverage. Most such coverage relied on agencies' reports, and criticism of the GOK's response to the pandemic has been confined largely to reporting critical utterances by perennial Islamist gadfly, Dr. Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, MP. The Minister of Health, Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer, stated August 2 that the MOH would soon stop issuing public updates on the number of confirmed cases in Kuwait. (Note: The WHO stopped issuing such daily updates in mid-July; neither the U.S. Centers for Disease Control nor the UK's Health Protection Agency issue such updates. End Note).

...WHILE U.S. MILITARY CASES RISE TO 131

13. (C) The GOK's case count does not include cases involving U.S. or coalition military personnel. Embassy and U.S. Army Central Command (ARCENT) in Kuwait continue to abide by an agreement whereby the GOK is responsible for making public U.S. military H1N1 cases. Embassy informs the MOH of new U.S. military cases on a weekly basis, based on daily updates provided to Embassy by ARCENT. Despite these updates, the GOK has not reported publicly any new U.S. military H1N1 cases since May 23, when a U.S. newspaper reported that 18

soldiers were infected (ref A).

¶4. (C) As of August 1, ARCENT reports that there have been 129 H1N1 influenza confirmations among U.S. military personnel transiting through, or assigned to bases in, Kuwait (of which two were civilians, one a DOD civilian employee and one a DOD contractor). Additionally, two transiting Australian soldiers -- who were sequestered and treated at a U.S. military medical facility -- were confirmed to have had H1N1 influenza. All confirmed cases have been mild and all affected personnel have returned to active duty.

ON-BASE TRANSMISSION INCREASES

¶5. (C) Recent days have seen a spike in the number of U.S. military personnel being isolated on the basis of influenza-like illnesses, with 63 in medical quarantine as of August 2 (including one British soldier). At least 45 of those in isolation are servicemen based at Camp Arifjan, according to ARCENT medical personnel, who report that suspected H1N1 influenza transmission has affected a number of units at the base. ARCENT is currently waiting for results on 129 samples from suspected H1N1 influenza cases; testing is being undertaken at the U.S. Navy's NAMRU-3 lab in Cairo, Egypt and at the USAFSAM lab in Landstuhl, Germany. (Note: Until late July, the vast majority of suspected and confirmed H1N1 cases were personnel transiting via U.S. bases in Kuwait en route to other locations in the CENTCOM AOR, rather than those assigned to camps in Kuwait. End Note).

¶6. (C) Kuwait Air Force medical personnel continue to oversee

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screening of all U.S. personnel arriving from the U.S. at Abdullah Al-Mubarak air base (adjacent to Kuwait International Airport). As of August 2, 59,712 U.S. military personnel have been screened by joint Kuwait Air Force-ARCENT medical teams since May 29.

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
visit Kuwait's Classified Website at:

http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Kuwa_it

WILLIAMS